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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Information Radio-Television Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2404

March 17, 1989



JUST BACK FROM BRUSSELS, Sec. Clayton Yeutter gets ready to go "On the Air" in USDA's Radio Studio for a Q & A session with farm broadcasters March 13. With Yeutter are Gary Crawford, who moderated the event, and Sec. Yeutter's press secretary, Kelly Shipp. (USDA Photo by Larry Rana.)

IN THE CURRENT ROUND of GATT negotiations, the U.S. has proposed gradually eliminating farm subsidies. What does this mean? Most developed nations subsidize farmers. These subsidies stimulate overproduction and cause wasteful or inefficient use of resources. The U.S. is not proposing that nations stop helping agriculture, rather that countries help their farmers in ways that permit producers to respond to marketplace signals. This would improve world markets for farm products and allow the U.S. and other nations to compete on "a level playing field."

SALMON-LOVING MEN FOUND -- All USDA scientists wanted was a few good men ... to eat a few hundred pounds of salmon to help assess the health benefits of fish oils. What they got was 2,000 volunteers -- from which they eventually chose 12. The 12 have begun 100 days of confinement, during which they'll eat 80 meals of baked, broiled and basted king salmon, the fattest of fishes. Contact: Marcia Wood (415) 559-6070.

OIL WARS -- Vegetable oil manufacturers are debating whose products are most beneficial -- or least damaging -- to human health. According to the American Soybean Assoc., many major food manufacturers are continuing to switch from cheaper imported palm oil to mostly U.S.-produced soybean and corn oils. According to the Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia, palm oil doesn't raise the serum cholesterol level, and in fact, may reduce it. Many U.S. food processors, under pressure from consumers and publicity generated by ASA and other U.S. farm groups, have stopped using palm oil in scores of products. The debate continues, however. Who may win? Olive oil, one of the oldest of oils, which turns out to be mono-unsaturated. Contact: James T. Heimbach (301) 436-7725.

IMPORTANCE OF OFF-FARM INCOMES -- Off-farm income is a permanent, significant component of total income for many farm households. In 1986, half of all farm households depended mainly on off-farm income for family living expenses, while a minority of farms, two-fifths depended primarily on farm income. A new USDA report examines the relative importance of farm and off-farm sources of income by type of farm, farm size, region and proximity to major metro employment centers. Source: Where Do Farm Households Earn Their Incomes? For a copy, call Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445.

CONSERVATION SIGNUP -- Farmers placed bids to put 3.2 million acres in the Conservation Reserve Program during the eighth signup period, which ended Feb. 24. In mid-June, USDA will announce how many bid acres were accepted. Contact: Robert Feist (202) 447-6789.

EFFECT OF SOIL EROSION -- Soil erosion decreases agricultural soil productivity by lowering crop yields and increasing the need for fertilizer and lime. According to a new USDA report, another 100 years of erosion at 1982 levels would lower the productivity of the Nation's crop and fiber sector by 3.6 percent. Source: Soil Erosion. For a copy, call Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445.

OAT FUTURE BOOMS -- The U.S. oat industry is gearing up for some exciting marketing moves in 1989, with Chicago Board of Trade oat futures traders optimistic for a banner-volume trading year, according to the Journal of Commerce. Unprecedented oat demand began in the fall of 1987 and there is no letup in sight. During 1988, oat cereal consumption jumped just over 30 percent and oat bran consumption jumped an astronomical 215 percent. Producers will probably plant more acreage to oats this year. Find out March 31, when USDA releases Prospective Plantings.

WASHING VEGGIES -- Consumers should wash fresh fruits and vegetables with plain water, not soap and water, USDA's Consumer Advisor Ann Chadwick says. Washing with plain water will remove surface pesticide residues and other impurities that may be on the items. Soap residues may be hard to remove from some foods and soap is not intended to be eaten. Contact: Ann Chadwick (202) 382-9681.

TINY ANIMALS BIG HIT -- Miniature horses, donkeys, rabbits, goats and pigs are a big hit with pet lovers, the Wall Street Journal reports. Knee-high pygmy goats, 15-inch high potbellied pigs and dwarf rabbits are part of the mini-pet craze. Owners say in addition to being cute, the pint-sized animals have tiny feed bills. Do they carry a mini price, too? Run-of-the mill registered mini-horses, mini-donkeys and Chinese potbelly pigs sell for about \$1,500; registered mini-goats are a comparative bargain at \$150 and for a mere \$20, a 2-1/2 pound Netherlands dwarf rabbit can be yours.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1658 -- A new buzzword in agriculture today seems to be "LISA." It stands for low input, sustainable agriculture. Some people see it as a viable alternative to current mainstream farming, which involves large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Pat O'Leary explores this alternative farming method with farmers, researchers and government leaders. (Weekly 13-1/2 min. documentary)

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1647 -- USDA News Highlights, crop insurance deadline nears; new conservation reserve signup figures; U.S. exports to Ireland; Soviet grain purchases. (Weekly reel of news features)

CONSUMER TIME #1139 -- Cooking illiteracy?; new report on healthy eating; new milk products; sweeping changes in your chimney; diet guidelines and your health. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. features)

UPCOMING -- Thursday, March 23, poultry production; Friday, March 24, livestock/poultry update, foreign ag. trade update; Tuesday, March 28, crop/weather update; Wednesday, March 29, aquaculture outlook; Thursday, March 20, ag. prices, world tobacco situation; Friday, March 31, prospective plantings, grain stocks; Monday, April 3, tobacco outlook; Tuesday, April 4, crop/weather update.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

DOWN TO EARTH, AGRICULTURAL UPDATE and USDA NEWS SERVICE are available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

Thursdays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 7:30-7:45 p.m., EST,
ORIGINAL UPLINK Transponder 12D

Saturdays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 10:30-11:15 a.m., EST,
ORIGINAL UPLINK Transponder 10D

Mondays AG UPDATE/USDA NEWS SERVICE, 8:30-9:15 a.m., EST,
REPEAT UPLINK Transponder 12D

OFF MIKE

COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR...award of the National Corn Growers Association has been presented to Max Armstrong (WGN/Tribune Radio Net, Chicago). Congratulations, Max.
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE...award has been presented to Harry Martin (Rural Radio Net, New Palestine) by the Indiana Young Farmers' Association. Ned Arthur (RRN) notes it is the Association's highest award. Our congratulations to Harry.
SPRING THAW...begins moving north this month. Pat Keliher (WAXX retired, Eau Claire) says snow amounts in northern Wisconsin should help river levels downstream. Says a good rainfall after the last frost could help produce an optimistic outlook for crop production.
WARM TEMPERATURES...hit quickly in Nebraska. Rich Hawkins (KRVN, Lexington) notes 80 degrees in early March. If this is winter what's summer going to be like?

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DROUGHT...lingers in some sections. Bill Craven (WAGT-TV, Augusta, Ga.) says as of March 1 his region received only 1" of rain in the last 5 months, one of the factors in smaller number of farms and reduced production acreage.
FEATURE...about Sec. Clayton Yeutter is being produced by Herb Plambeck for WMT, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We were pleased to provide material for the program.
NICE NOTE...from Robin Kinney (Linder Farm Network, Willmar, Minn.) to our Gary Crawford and Brenda Curtis regarding coverage of events at USDA. Our thanks for the feedback.
REQUEST FOR INFO...about USDA TV satellite schedule received from J.D. Nixon (KFDM-TV, Beaumont, Texas) farm and garden show producer. We sent the "green sheet" list of radio and TV programs, Spanish radio service, and how to obtain programs.



Vic Powell, Chief, Radio & Television Division